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FLIGHTS OF FANCY

IN
PROSE AND VERSE.

BY

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Darud bar - muktagi -
College Row - Calcutta.

THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

A TALE OF RAJPOOTANA.

THE setting sun cast its level beams on the wild and romantic track that led from Cheetore to Pathar—that elevated table-land, which is still famous as being once the seat of the celebrated Chieftain Alloo Hara of Bumaoda. Hundreds of tall bananas flung their verdant arms over this track, and formed a sort of vista, which afforded considerable protection to travellers from the scorching heat of the sun. It was through this avenue that a solitary Brahmin was seen leisurely pursuing his course. In his left hand he held a rude *chattra* made of palm leaves, and in his other hand he carried a cocoanut strangely daubed with vermillion, on which, as he proceeded, he cast his eyes from time to time. From his general appearance he seemed so dejected and crest-fallen, that it was evident his heart was not quite at ease. On a sudden was heard the shrill tone of the sacred conch, and the Brahmin, as if awaked from a reverie, looked on all sides with an enquiring gaze : he could not for sometime see anything. At length a cavalcade came to view in that part where the road took a turn. The Brahmin immediately stood on one side of the road, in order to allow sufficient space for the horsemen to pass. The party was headed by a young man,

who, to judge from his appearance and the number of his retinue, was a personage of no ordinary descent. He was about his twentieth year, and the down on his upper-lip had scarcely assumed the sleek dark curl of perfect manhood ; his form had been developed by every kind of bodily exercise, and his limbs were rounded to their full proportion ; to these advantages were added a fair complexion and a countenance so highly engaging, that it gave him an appearance superlatively handsome. He was dressed in the plainest white garb, and wore on his head a turban such as the Rajpoots of Mewar generally wear. The only ornament that distinguished him from his companions were a rich *kuljee** made of the finest diamonds and a string of unusually large pearls which was fastened close around his neck. A magnificent white steed, having a saddle-cloth of tiger's skin, with tassels of gold that nearly swept the ground, bore the youth, who sat upon its back in that easy and graceful attitude which the best artist might have studied as a model : he had reined in the horse to a slow and measured pace, so as to show off his horsemanship and the high mettle of the animal to the best advantage. Some four or five of his companions were on horseback, the rest followed him on foot ; of these, some carried the falcon on their wrists, some led the furious hounds, while others carried the slain deer on their shoulders ; it was evident, therefore, that these persons were returning from the chase. The party soon came up to the place where the Brahmin was standing : the youth having surveyed him with a scrutinizing glance, with the utmost condescension thus addressed him :—

“ My salutations to thee, most worthy Brahmin.”

“ Victory attend thee ! most worthy sir.”

* A kind of ornament made of jewels, set in gold, which is worn on the turban.

" And may I ask you for whom that *sreephul** is intended ? "

" For His Majesty the Rana of Cheetore—or rather it *was* intended for him."

" His Majesty has not then accepted the offer ? "

" Please you, sir, no."

" But may I ask who it was that sent the *sreephul*, and why was it that the Rana did not accept it ? "

" To explain to you that, sir, I must, with your permission, give a short prelude. The renowned Chieftain Lallajee, who is descended from the illustrious *Hara* family, and is a near relation of the celebrated Alloo Hara, resides in the Castle of Bumaoda, in Pathar. He owes his allegiance to His Majesty the Rana, and is one of the strongest pillars of the kingdom of Cheetore. His fame extends as far as the utmost limits of known land, and his glory yieldeth to none but his Sovereign's. Now this Lallajee has an only daughter—the fair Rutnavali. The brave and the valiant, the young and the handsome, in all Rajasthan are ambitious of winning the hand of this lovely creature. The poets say, that the moon being put to shame by her superior beauty 'hid herself amidst the clouds, and Rhemba† through jealousy wept.' Lallajee, as in duty bound, first offered her to his liege lord, but the Rana has declined to accept her, for the Chieftain is a little inferior to His Majesty in point of caste, and thus 'as he wantonly thrown away an invaluable gem, of which the possession ——'

" Enough, my good Brahmin ; you need not expatiate any more on the beauty of the fair Rutnavali, for the songs of the Bhats‡ have spread her fame far and wide. But since you

* The cocoanut. It is customary among the Rajpoots, when they intend to give their daughters in marriage, to send this fruit to the intended bridegroom, who, if he accepts it, the marriage contract is considered as settled.

† The Indian Venus.

‡ The Bhats are a sect of people resembling the bards of old of Great Britain. For a further account, see *The Hindus*, Vol. II., page 47.

seem to be thus disappointed, I would fain suggest to you a plan which might ensure some success to your mission, namely, since His Majesty the Rana has thought fit to decline the offer, could not his son be induced to accept it?—for I assure you, Rutnavali is a gem which is alone worthy of the royal zenana."

"Excuse me, sir; but I am apt to smile at the very ~~complex~~-ness of your question, for the Rana's son is as superior in point of caste to Lallajee as the Rana himself; how is it possible, then, for the son to accept the *sreephul* when the father has brought forward the consideration of caste?"

The youth was perhaps a little nettled at the Brahmin's manner, but stifling his displeasure, if he felt any, he said, "But supposing the young Prince were willing to accept the *sreephul* in spite of his royal father's disapprobation, could you have any objection to it?"

"Objection! No, none whatever, for I am sure the Chief of Bumaoda would be most happy to get such a worthy son-in-law, of whose person and quality fame speaks so loudly. As for me, what could be more pleasing to the family-priest than this most desirable match? for, independently of the consideration that a person of such high rank must give very large donatives to the dependants and domestics of the Chieftain, (and especially to the priest who has been connected with that family for upwards of thirty years,) the very idea, that our Rutnavali should be wedded to such a bridegroom, gives me infinite pleasure. In short, sir, taking your supposition for granted, should the young Prince be willing to accept the *sreephul*, I would have no objection to offer it to him."

No sooner had the Brahmin finished his speech, than the youth, who had heard him out with the utmost patience, now, with a smiling face, gracefully extended his right hand to receive the offer. At this the Brahmin stepped back, and began to stare at him with a wondering gaze; he was surprised to

find that the youth, with whom he had been conversing so familiarly, was no other than the renowned Prince Kaitsi, whose valor and chivalry the bards so often celebrated ; at length he held out the *sreephal* as if mechanically, and the Prince, with a gracious smile, received it.

But a cloud soon overcast the brow of the good old Brahmin, for it was then that he began to doubt whether the youth, who accepted the fruit, was the identical Prince Kaitsi, and a hundred times did he blame himself for being so credulous ; he was relieved, however, from this uneasy state of mind, when the Prince requested him to accompany him to his father's palace ; the Brahmin most gladly accepted the invitation, and when he had arrived there, every spark of doubt fled from his mind ; joining, therefore, his hands together in the most suppliant manner, he humbly requested the Prince to forgive him for any offence that he might have given him during their conversation on the road. The royal youth gave him every assurance of forgiveness, and having fixed the day when he would appear to claim his affianced bride, dismissed the Brahmin with a present of a hundred pieces of gold, adding, with a smile, "that the claims of the old family-priest shall on no account be forgotten." The Brahmin, having bestowed his blessings on the Prince, took his leave and pursued his way towards Pathar, perfectly satisfied with the success of his mission, and the kind and condescending manners of the youthful Prince—to mention nothing about the extreme good effect that the promise of a reward had upon the naturally avaricious mind of the Brahmin.

The Prince having thus dismissed the old priest, entered his own private apartment, and ordered the waiter to bring in the famous Bhat Bheemsen, who was the *Pat-Bardai* or chief bard of the country. " *Jo hookum*,"* said the servant, and, bowing profoundly, retired. Soon after a tall figure of a

* As your order.

man entered the room. He was of a swarthy complexion, with a pair of mustachios twirled up nearly to his temples ; his manly form was enveloped in a peculiar flowing white dress, while on his head was placed a high loose-folded turban dashingly inclined on one side, and from it was negligently suspended a garland of *Chamelee* and *Champa* ; he wore a necklace of massive gold, from which depended an image of the *Pritriswur* (manes), which at once showed the rank and professsion of the chief bard, Bheemsen Bardai.

The Prince, who was reclining on a rich velvet cushion, turned himself towards the Bhat, and graciously bade him sit on the carpet that was spread beside him : the bard, having made a deep obeisance, did as he was directed.

“ Bheemsen Bardai,” said the Prince, “ let me ask you a question. Can a Bhat keep a secret ? ” The bard bent his brow as if he felt dishonored by the Prince’s doubt, and assuming an air of dignity, replied, “ And may I ask if your Highness knows of any instance in which a Bhat has not kept a secret ? ”

“ No ; I did not intend to give you any offence, but asked you the question merely for a satisfaction of my mind, and to make myself doubly sure on a point of great importance.”

“ I pledge myself, the „, that anything that your Highness may condescend to entrust to my ears shall never come to my lips.”

“ Well, then, to be plain with you, I have made up my mind to marry ——”

“ Marry ! —and whom, may I ask, doth your Highness intend to marry ? ”

“ The daughter of Lallajee of Bumaoda—the renowned Rutnavali.”

“ Did your Highness mention the name of Lallajee ? ”

“ Aye ; but what of that ? You seem to be struck with almost every word that I utter—what is the reason ? ”

"Because your Highness is pleased to speak of things that, in my humble judgment, seem quite impossible."

"Impossible! How impossible?"

"*Firstly*,—How can your Highness condescend to have connection with a family so very inferior to you in point of caste?

"*Secondly*, —"

"Stay—you must remember, Bheem, that that naughty and mischievous god, Love, makes no distinction of caste, and that it is his pleasure to couple folks in a most unexpected manner."

"But I think your Highness never saw this daughter of Lallajee."

"Never saw her, sayest thou? Don't you remember—but no, you were not then with me—last year we had ventured out to a very unusual distance, at the time of the *Mahoorut ke Shikar**? On our way home we were surprised by nightfall, and as the Castle of Lallajee was not far off from our road, we made up our minds to become his guests. We were most hospitably received by him, and it was then that I had the blessed opportunity of seeing that divine object of my love—the angelic Rutnavali. O! that you had been with me that night! Nature, as if anxious to show what she can do when she puts her whole ingenuity to the task, has produced this most lovely creature, whose beauty fascinates the heart of every one that sees her. From that night, when my eyes first met her charms, she has become the idol of my heart. Ever since have I been waiting for an opportunity to make my suit to the father of this lovely girl, but circumstances have been so much against me, that, within a whole twelvemonth, I could not find a fit time to make my request. But *Bhugwan*† has at last taken pity on my condition, and

* It means the chase fixed astrologically. It is also called the *Aheria* or the spring-hunt. For a further account, see *Todd's Rajasthan*.

† The Devi.

has been graciously pleased to put me in a fair way of winning the object of my desire. I will tell you how. This evening, when I was returning from the chase, I happened to meet a Brahmin on the road, who was carrying the marriage *sreepul* in his hand: on enquiry, I found that the fruit was sent by Lallajee to my royal father, offering Rutnavali in marriage. O ! think in what a state of mind I was then!—but gladly did I hear that His Majesty had refused to accept it ; my heart throbbed within my breast with very ecstacy, and, as a matter of course, I joyfully extended my hand to receive the offer ; and here have I won the treasure ! I have fixed the day when our marriage is to take place, and ere long you shall see me the happiest being on earth."

" But has your Highness obtained the permission of his Majesty ?"

" There's the rub ! I am sure His Majesty will never consent to what he considers an unequal match, and it is therefore that I enjoined such strict secrecy."

" But how will your Highness manage the affair without getting His Majesty's permission to marry ?"

" Why, thus :—I will ask His Majesty's permission to go out on a hunting excursion at some distance, and with a train befitting my rank I will set out for Bumaoda—of course accompanied by you."

" By *me!*" exclaimed the Bhat, with a great deal of consternation. " Bhugwanjee prevent that your Highness should order me to do anything that is directly opposed to the wishes of your royal father."

" But yet go you must," said the Prince rather warmly—"that is, if you owe any allegiance to the Prince who is the heir-apparent to the throne ; for you know, to go to marry without a *Bhat*,* is to go to battle without a sword."

The Bhat was silent and thoughtful.

* It is customary for the bridegroom to take a *Bhat* with him when he goes to marry.

But after a great deal of fruitless expostulation, he at length said :—“ Since it is the determined will of your Highness that I should go, it is not fitting that I should bandy words with my Prince. I will go. But if, by this conduct of mine, His Majesty should happen to be displeased, your Highness must take upon yourself to mediate on my behalf. One thing more I must premise. Your Highness is aware, that in such marriage ceremonies, it is customary with the father of the bride to give large donations to the *Bhat* who accompanies the bridegroom ; but it is also a fact not unknown to your Highness, that I am bound by the strongest promises to His Majesty the Rana not to accept bounty from any other person but from his royal self. I must therefore earnestly beg your Highness to excuse me when I refuse to accept the offer of your Highness’ future father-in-law.”

“ The request is granted. Now go and prepare thyself, for the day when we start is drawing nigh.”

Bheemsen took his leave.

Leaving here the Prince to make the necessary preparations for the marriage procession, we must convey our readers to the Castle of Lalkajee. The old Chieftain was quite pleased when he heard from the family-priest the strange and unforeseen success of his mission, and right glad at heart was his ancient dame that, by a happy chance of fate her “ *peearree betee*”* was to be wedded to a youthful Prince, and that she was to have a son-in-law young, handsome, and valiant, instead of the old Rana, who had already expended more than half his life. The youthful companions of Rutnavali congratulated her on the happy occurrence, but the fair bride only smiled and blushed.

All waited anxiously for the approach of the day appointed for the marriage, and at last the nuptial morning dawned.

* Her beloved daughter.

Lallajee was "up with the lark," and gave orders to make the necessary preparations for the proper reception of the bridegroom. Festoons of gay flowers and green mango-leaves* were hung on all sides of the Castle, and silver vessels, filled brimful with water, were placed on either side of the gateway. All the artificial fountains were made to play, and the whole Castle was decorated with unusual pomp and grandeur. That day the door of the Castle was open to every one, and the egress and ingress of people were continual. The poor and the needy received alms, and feastings and merriment went on uninterrupted there. The worthy dame of Lallajee herself presided in the kitchen amidst a host of dependant female relations, and she was seen busily bustling about from room to room, though perhaps she had very little or nothing actually to do ; but she was busy because the mistress of the house ought to be busy on such great occasions. A gathering of relations and kinsmen had already begun, and Lallajee gave his guests as warm a reception as he could ; offering them the *attar* and *pan* with his own hands. The cup of *uml-paneet*† was cheerfully circulated amongst the persons invited, and a hearty meal was soon after brought, to which the hungry guests did ample justice.

It was nearly evening, and refreshments were distributed amongst the large crowd that had assembled outside of the Castle, to witness the pomp of the bridegroom's procession. Expectation was on tip-toe for the approach of the Prince ; but the grey hue of twilight had nearly given place to the sombre shades of night, but yet there was no sign of his coming. Lallajee, waxing impatient with the delay, went up to the terrace, whence he could command a more distant

* It is customary to hang up festoons of mango-leaves at the time of the marriage.

† Solution of opium, the favorite beverage of the Rajpoots—*vide Todd's Rajputan*, Vol. I., page 614.

view, but all in vain ; for he could see nothing, and was obliged, disappointed, to make his way back down-stairs. Soon after a cry was raised amongst the assembled multitude of " Lo ! the Prince comes—the bridegroom approaches !" and a broad light was visible at a distance. It gradually moved towards the Castle, and the procession of the Prince became perfectly visible. Flags of many different colors were waving in the air, and about a hundred men carried torches and flambeaux, which shed a light to a considerable distance. The stately figure of the Prince was perfectly distinguishable amidst the vast concourse of his retinue ; he was most gorgeously drest in *kincob*, with a profuse embroidery of " barbaric pearl and gold," and was mounted on a noble charger, caparisoned in the richest trappings ; beside him rode the Bard Eheemsen Bardai, with an air of great consequence ; while large number of horses, mounted by stout, broad-chested Rajpoots, made up the rear. In the meantime drums, double-drums, gongs, and other musical instruments were sounding from the Castle, and seemed to vie with each other as to which could make the greatest noise. The flower of Lallajee's army, consisting of about six hundred strong, were drawn up in a double row, from the outer entrance to the inner gate of the Castle. These persons were dressed in their most gorgeous livery, each bearing a shield right across his breast and a long spear in his right hand. The procession moved up to the Castle gate, and the veteran Chieftain Lallajee received the Prince there with every mark of honor : young, handsome damsels, about fifteen in number, who had been waiting at the gate, now began to sound small conch-shells, and auspiciously ushered in the bridegroom, by sprinkling water and scattering *dureet** and grain. The Prince was then conducted to a stately hall, where fragrant candles shed a light as bright as day ;

* A kind of grass.

in the middle of the hall was placed a peculiar small golden jug, surmounted with green mango-leaves ; on either side of this jug was spread a small carpet of the richest texture. On one of these the Prince was about to sit, when, unfortunately, a lizard ticked thrice over-head : the Prince stood still, hesitating to take his seat in consequence of this omen. At this time the old family-priest stepped forward, and warmly urged the Prince on no account to sit there, and said that the carpet, as well as the jug, should be removed to a few yards distant, quoting a Sanscrit verse in support of his assertion. The injunction of the priest was immediately complied with, and the bridegroom then took his seat on the carpet. But the assembled guests seemed very gloomy at the occurrence of this inauspicious omen, at the very moment when the ceremony was to begin : there was therefore a dead pause for some time, until Lallajee himself broke the silence. "In sooth, sir," said he, "it is not becoming that you should sit in this moody and contemplative manner at the nuptial of our fair Rutnavali ; it is not proper, I say, gentlemen, that we should sit like grave philosophers when continual mirth ought to reign ; banish all these idle fears and let us be as merry as possible :—ho ! waiter, bring in the *peecula*," and the cup of *uml-panee* was once more cheerfully circulated.

The Brahmins now began to chant portions of the *Vedas* in a solemn and sonorous tone ; after which the Bhats stood up and recited in chorus verses containing a genealogical account, joined with a high praise of both families, and ended the whole with a Sanscrit couplet, containing a wish for the health and prosperity of the Prince and Rutnavali. After this they sat down, and a number of first-rate musicians, with their *veen*, *kannoona*, and *pakhawas*,* struck up a sweet and plaintive air. They soon changed it to a most lively strain,

* Different kinds of musical instruments.

and immediately the great arched door at the upper extremity of the hall opened, and a splendid set of apartments, profusely lighted with candles, came into view. All eyes were now turned towards that side, and the lovely Rutnavali was seen slowly approaching. She was dressed in robes of virgin white, richly worked in gold; she had put on some of her ornaments of the highest value, and amongst others was conspicuous a necklace of large white pearls; to this was attached a butterfly (formed of gems of different colors), which was stuck close beside the heart. An ornament resembling a *tiara*, made of diamonds, set in filigree works, was placed on her head, and over this the rose-colored bridal veil was thrown with a studied negligence. The bride was leaning on the arms of one of her favorite female companions, and was surrounded by about six or seven of her most handsome maids. Her eyes were cast down, a blush suffused her cheeks, and a sweet smile sat serenely on her ruby lips.

“ Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eyes,
In every gesture dignity and love.”

With graceful steps and slow did Rutnavali enter the hall and take her seat on the small carpet just opposite the Prince.

The music ceased, and the family-priest, with a most consequential air, took a small mattress made of *kusha** grass, and sitting down cross-legged, began to repeat the marriage *muntras*. The night was pretty far advanced, and many of the guests retired to take slight refreshments and to come back and witness the *nautch*, which was to take place as soon as the nuptial ceremony was over. Among others, the Bhat Bheemsen Bardai also retired, and the Chieftain Lallajee himself went out to see if proper accommodations were given to all his guests. The marriage rite was nearly drawing to a

* A species of grass considered to be very pure.

close, and the guests were again assembling in the hall, and Lallajee was seen busily giving orders to make the necessary preparations for the *nautch*.

The ceremony of the *haitle* (joining of the hands of the bridegroom and the bride) had just begun, when a sudden cry arose that the "sacred bard of Cheetore was slain;" it soon reached the ear of the Prince, who immediately snatched away his hand from his bride and placed it on the hilt of his sword ; fire darted from his eyes, and the terrified old priest, seeing the state of things, jumped back with dismay ; his eyes opened widely as if they would start out from their sockets, his lips parted, while his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth ; his knees smote against each other, his right hand was uplifted as if to ward off the blow, while the other was stretched backward as if to grope his way out, and thus to make good his retreat ; but fear sometimes adds wings to the heels, and sometimes nails them to the ground ; the latter was the case with the poor old priest, who, though he had nothing actually to fear, stood mute and motionless as a wooden scare-crow. The Prince immediately went down to the court-yard and demanded vengeance for the death of the bard Bheem Sen. A great confusion arose, and it was now Lallajee's turn to be offended : he came down with his shield and his *tulwar*, and with a most angry look thus addressed the heir of Cheetore :—“ Young Prince,” said he, “ I owe allegiance to your father ; but since you have thought fit, by your indignities, to excite the ire of a man naturally patient, I declare that henceforth I renounce all allegiance to the throne of Cheetore, and that it is by your own fault that you have turned one of your warmest friends into one of your bitterest foes ; for not content with the dis-honor your father has heaped upon me, by not accepting the *srecphul*, you have yourself insulted me in my own Castle : this, I say, I will no longer brook.”

"A truce to thy insolent tone," cried the Prince ; "this comes with a very ill grace from a vassal and a slave, and I assure thee it shall not go unpunished." Saying this he unsheathed his sword and stood ready for attack ; but the friends and companions of either party, seeing the critical state of things and unwilling that there should be any bloodshed, where but lately mirth and conviviality reigned, immediately interfered, and the Prince was conducted outside of the Castle, where horses were in readiness. He was with difficulty prevailed upon to mount his steed, and accompanied by a few of his companions he galloped off for Chetore. On the road he began to ask the persons that were with him if they knew why the bard Bheemsen was murdered ; all answered in the negative, except one, who kept himself silent ; observing this, therefore, the Prince questioned him in particular. "Why do you remain silent, Ramdeen ? Say, do you know anything about this affair ?" Ramdeen drew near the Prince and said :—"To speak the truth, noble Prince, Bheemsen was not murdered by Lallajee."

"Not murdered by him ? How ? Was he then killed by somebody else ?"

"Not so, neither ; please your Highness, he killed himself."

"Killed himself ! How do you mean ?"

"I was present at the time, and by your Highness' gracious patience I will presently disclose all the circumstances. Lallajee had offered the Bhat a bag containing a thousand pieces of silver and a horse richly caparisoned ; but he refused to accept anything, saying, that he was under an oath to his Majesty the Rana not to receive presents from any other person ; but Lallajee soon doubled the contents of the bag and again offered him, but the bard once more rejected it. Your Highness is aware what infamy awaits a person if he cannot give anything to the Bhat who accompanies the bridegroom. Lallajee, therefore, brought four huge bags of money, and

emptied their contents before the astonished Bheem ; it was a temptation too great for the poor Bhat to resist, and at the earnest entreaty of the old Chieftain he accepted the present. But soon after his conscience began to revolt against this deed, and, unable to bear the torture of his mind, he committed suicide."

"But yet," said the Prince, "we must lay the blame on Lallajee for thus putting the avarice of the *Bhat* to the most severe test ; he is, therefore, at least, the secondary cause of the death of *kumbukhta** Bheem. Moreover, I had myself requested Lallajee not to offer any present to the Bhat, (though I never thought of mentioning the reason thereof,) and when in spite of that he has caused the death of our royal bard, I say he shall by no means go unpunished." The Prince soon reached Cheetore, and having obtained the permission of his royal father to bring the insurgent Chief to submission, with a pretty large army he began to hover about the adjacent parts of Bumaoda, and only waited for an opportunity to surprise the Castle itself.

The merry month of *Phalgun* arrived, and the time of the *Aheria* or spring-hunt approached ; notwithstanding the vicinity of the enemy, Lallajee resolved to go to the chase, for he was a rigid Hindoo, and would not let the festival pass without observing it. Orders were given to make the necessary preparations for the grand hunt, and the astrologer, according to custom, fixed the early part of the morning as the most auspicious time for sallying forth. The morning dawned, and the friends and kinsmen of the Chieftain were all ready dressed in their gay robes of green. At length Lallajee himself came out, and mounting his powerful charger, set out for the *shikar*.† The *nagaras* began to sound loudly, and the shrill tone of the sacred conch resounded over the distant

* Unfortunate.

Hunt.

plain. The pack of dogs began to bay aloud, and with whooping and hallooing the company proceeded merrily on. They had only come as far as the plains of Tookeraye, when Lallajee was encountered by the young Prince Kaitsi. He was accompanied by about a hundred soldiers, the flower of his army, while Lallajee had with him only about sixty fighting-men. Seeing, therefore, the odds that were against him, he thus addressed the Prince :—“ Young Prince,” said he, “ I knew perfectly well that you will meet me here, but you shall soon see what a veteran Chief can do, when exasperated with the indignities heaped upon him. It is a pity however,” added he, “ that the blood of these innocent men should be shed in a cause which concerns only us two ; I propose, therefore, that we two meet in single combat, man to man, and thus settle the affair at once.” The Prince could not but concede to this honorable proposal. Both, therefore, prepared for the combat, and each drew his *khanda** bright, and began to waive it in the air. They closed upon each other most furiously, and the clashing of their steel, the clattering of the horses’ hoofs, and the exclamations of the men of either party, as victory seemed to side with the Prince or the Chieftain, spread a mingled noise far across the plain. The combat was a hard-fought one, and the Prince found it no very easy task to deal with the veteran Chieftain : both panted for breath. At length the Prince succeeded in inflicting a mortal wound on the left side of Lallajee, who, immediately taking his horse a few paces back, like a wounded lion darted with full force at his antagonist, and, before he could defend himself, passed his spear right through the bosom of the Prince, who fell back dead from his horse. Lallajee also, who had only life sufficient to take vengeance on his enemy, soon dropped down a corpse upon the ground. The men on either

* Sword.

side, seeing the fall of their masters, engaged themselves in a skirmish, and Lallajee's army being better trained, succeeded in routing the opposite party, notwithstanding the superiority of their numbers. The bodies of the Prince and the Chieftain were both carried to the castle of Bumaoda, where tidings of their deaths had reached long before. Who can describe the sorrow of the old lady—the wife of Lallajee ! She wept most bitterly, and began actually to rave with despair. It was on this occasion that, as a *suttee*, she uttered the imprecation—"Never shall a Rana and a Rao meet together in the *Aheria* but death shall occur."

Pyres were prepared for the Prince and the Chieftain, and the old dame, taking a most affectionate farewell of her daughter, mounted the funeral pile of her husband ; and Rutnavali, at once a virgin and a widow—Rutnavali, the lovely and the beautiful, mounted the pyre of the Prince, and was soon reduced to ashes.

THE RAJPOOTNEE'S SONG.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FESTIVAL OF CAMDEV.*

I.

SWEET Spring is now ended—the Summer wind blows,
 So weave we the chaplet of *Champac* and Rose,
Chameli and *Magra* in garlands we twine,
 For this is the Feast of *Kandurva* divine.

II.

God of the bright bow! we hail thee with joy,
 May'st thou add to our peace, and our sorrows destroy,
 Thou who canst fill all creation with mirth,
 Thou who hast power o'er heaven and earth.

III.

Glory to *Cām*!—thou the loveliest still,
 Thou who e'en sage minds with raptures can fill ;
 Though of sweet flowers thine arrows be made,
 Even great *Shiva* their power hath obeyed.

IV.

We are but women, by nature made weak,
 'Tis therefore thus humbly thy favor we seek ;
 Grant us this boon, that our lov'd lords may never
 Regard us unkindly, but love us for ever.

V.

Then, oh Ruler of hearts ! sincerely shall we,
 Each year, with fresh spirits, pay homage to thee ;
 Only grant us this boon, which thus humbly we crave,
 And with songs shall we honor the Feast of *Cāmdev*.

* The Hindu Cupid.

T H E T E A R.

LOLAH ! said I, with eyes that beam,
 And features of unearthly grace,
 So like an angel pure you seem
 That sure in heaven you'll find a place ;—
 My Lolah sighed and hung her head,
 Her brow seemed clouded at the time,
 And sorrow there its twilight spread,
 For mem'ry taxed her with a crime.
 And soon I saw a timid tear
 Her eyelash grace ere yet it fell,
 Than morning dew it seemed more clear,
 As pure it left its radiant cell.
 Then slow adown her cheek so fair
 This bright, this liquid gem did flow,
 Nor yet could Oman's pearl compare
 With this small crystal's lucid glow ;
 Her Guardian-Spirit caught this tear,
 On wings of rainbow-color bright,
 And leaving this our lower sphere
 Towards the heavens she bent her flight ;
 And passing thro' the ethereal clime,
 To the Recording-Angel took,
 She dropp'd the tear upon the crime,
 And quite effaced it from his book.*

* The last Stanza is partly borrowed from Sterne.

SONNET TO SPRING.

How glorious is thy green approach, sweet Spring !
 When every tree assumes its gayest hue,
 When birds from woodland bowers in chorus sing,
 And all seem fresh as if created new.
 When Nature—like a maid in all her charms,
 That once again her absent lover meets—
 Throws her fair form into the youthful arms
 Of Spring, and smiling blandly, warmly greets.
 And with this season comes a wish to be
 Away in some still grove where Pleasure hides,
 Where the sweet South-wind swells its od'rous tides,
 And laughing blossoms bloom on every tree ;
 Nor flowers alone expand, but youthful hearts
 Bud with the bliss that new-born Love imparts.

SONNET TO THE KOKIL.

MELODIOUS *Kokil*!—warbler of the wood !
 Whose song can melt into a milder mood
 E'en winter stern ;—we welcome thy return ;
 For thou dost usher in delightful Spring,
 Who smiling scatters from her plenteous urn
 Fresh flowers and leaves, and in her train doth bring
 Celestial Joys—a glorious band who roam
 'Midst fields and plains. Sweet bird, thy songs invite
 The timid loving maidens from their home
 To meet fond lovers by the pale moon's light
 In bliss supreme, to chase dull care away.
 Thrice happy bird ! for these we love thee well,
 Oh ! may'st thou ever in these green groves dwell,
 And tune thy lays of love all night and day.

SONG.

RADHA'S ANXIETY FOR THE ABSENCE OF KRISHNA.

I.

WHERE roves the youth whose beaming eye
 My maiden heart hath stole ?
 He cometh not, the night is nigh,
 Ah ! what shall cheer my soul.

II.

Perchance some other nymph, whose lot
 Is happier than my own,
 Doth now engross my lover's thought
 While thus I weep alone.

III.

Ha ! was that his sweet flute which sent
 That charming silver sound ?—
 It was the gale that sighing went
 And all is still around.

IV.

O ! haste thee, love, why thus delay ?
 The twilight gloom doth lour,
 The evening star shall guide thy way,
 O ! haste thee to my bower.

SOU DAMEENEE; OR, THE AMEER'S DAUGHTER.

[AN ORIENTAL TALE.]

IT was a beautiful morning, and the fair city of Jeypoor shone in calm splendour. Its many-storied houses richly decorated with paintings in fresco,* its stone balconies and porticos, and, above all, its singularly shaped palace, its noble gardens, terrace above terrace, its high stucco-covered temples vying with the most polished marble in lustre, all combine to give Jeypoor that bright and picturesque aspect, which makes it decidedly the handsomest city in all Hindooostan. The rising sun, peering through the stained glass of the window, shone in many-colored radiance on the marble saloon of Ameer Bheem Sing's zenana. In the middle of this lofty hall an agate fountain kept playing with a perpetual murmur, and reflected back the sunbeams in a hundred broken rainbows ; the walls were decorated with portraits of ancient Rajpoot Kings and Chiefs, and gay *loories* and sweet *shamas* in beautiful cages were suspended from the ceilings in all directions. A rich carpet of the finest Persian texture covered the floor, while at the upper extremity of the hall was placed a thick musiud,† over which was spread a white piece of Cashmere shawl, so soft and so finely woven, that even a Sybarite might think it a luxury to repose there. Upon this was seated our fair heroine, in the full bloom of her youth and beauty. She was not above the middle stature, but her features were perfectly chiselled, and her complexion was so beautifully

* Jeypoor was built, it is said by an Italian Artist, and hence its superior architectural beauty.

† A sort of a cushion on which the great personages of the East seat themselves.

transparent, that many of those sanguine streams that carried life through every part of her fair frame were distinctly visible. A garment of fine white muslin, worked in gold, was thrown loosely over her body, and collected about the middle with a rich waistband of Benares-brocade; her flowing *ghagree* waved in ample folds about her feet, a thin veil of sky-blue silk half covered her graceful head; while her dark locks hung negligently in jetty curls over her fair forehead and neck. An unusually large diamond of the purest ray graced the right side of her head, and seemed like Vesperus glimmering amongst gathering evening clouds. But amidst all this luxury—this gay scene of splendour, why sits Soudameenee disconsolate? Her blooming cheek reposes on her delicate little palm, her elbow rests on a large pillow of crimson velvet, and her beautiful black eyes, beaming with a pensive lustre from beneath

“The soft languor of the drooping lid,”

seem fixed with a vacant gaze on the garden adjoining the house.

The front door of the hall slowly opened, and a maid servant—a young girl of about twenty—approached her mistress, and folding her hands together in token of deep reverence, said in a low voice that Dame Leelavatee awaited her commands. Soudameenee sat in such an abstracted mood of mind, that she did not seem to listen to what had been said by her maid, who, however, stood in the same attitude of respect, until she happened to catch the eyes of her youthful mistress. Soudameenee then asked her what she wanted, and the girl again announced the coming of Leelavatee.

“Let her come in,” said the Ameer’s daughter, and the little maid retired.

Soon after, an old woman, who had passed her sixtieth year, hobbled into Soudameenee’s presence, holding a thick Indian

cane to support her frame, which was almost doubled down with age. She made her obeisance to the Ameer's daughter, and seated herself at a little distance from the *musnud*.

Leelavatee was the wife of a barber who died when she was very young ; she partook so much of the shrewdness of her race, that she perfectly verified the old Sanscrit saying, that "barbers are the most cunning amongst men, as foxes are amongst the quadrupeds ;" during her youthful widowhood her morals were by no means of an unimpeachable character, and she had played "such fantastic tricks before high heaven," as scandalized her name throughout the city. But during the latter part of her life she professed to have turned her whole thought to piety and devotion. She had, however, a great love for her own sex, and always possessed an infinite desire to be of service to them ; indeed, she had been the *confidante* of many a love-sick girl ; for having known from experience the difficulties and obstacles that are to be met with, from the rise to the fall of that passion, she freely gave her advice to the maidens how to conduct themselves in their "whole course of love." This was not all ; she could procure an interview of the lovers themselves, for she thought it a pity that a youthful pair should be drooping and pining for each other, and her kind heart was ever disposed to regard it as a merit to rescue them from that untimely death, which their unsuccessful love might cause. She was, besides, mistress of the whole pharmacopœia for all kinds of female distempers, and it was believed that she was perfectly acquainted with all sorts of drugs, charms and conjurations, so that she could metamorphose a beautiful youth to the shape of a lamb, if it was required, and could, as she herself declared, "bring down the moon from the firmament," were it only to gratify the whim of some fair maiden. Such was the character of the renowned Leelavatee, who was feared and

obeyed by every one for her knowledge in the occult sciences. Soudameenee sat silent, until the old woman, assuming an air of complaisance, drew near the *musnud*, and with a half-smiling face enquired why she looked so sad, and what it was that ailed the fairest flower of Rajasthan ?

" Nothing," replied Soudameenee, with affected indifference.

" Nothing !" echoed the dame ; " I am sure those drooping eyes, and that face without its wonted smile, were never meant for nothing. Art thou sick, child ?"

" Pooh !" exclaimed the fair maiden ; " what makes thee think so ; do I look sickly ?"

" Nay, but thou art so sad," said the old woman, " my old heart can never bear to see a youthful maid, and particularly you, my dear child, in such a mood of mind ; when I was young, I was ever——"

" Something which is of very little consequence to me," interrupted the fair daughter of Bheem.

" Nay then, tell me what makes you so sad," said Leelavatee importunately.

" I tell thee, dame, it is nothing," replied the girl.

" I am sure I was not sent for, for nothing," said the dame.

" I think I never sent for thee," replied the Beauty, pretending ignorance.

" You never sent for me ! Strange enough !" said the old woman. " Well, supposing I came here of my own will, my great love for you at least warrants my importunity to know the cause of your sadness."

" Since thou art determined," said the girl, " to worry me with this question, I may tell thee that, if what report says of thee be true, thou mayest as well try thy skill in necromancy, and ascertain what it is that ails me."

The old woman smiled a little and said, " You wish me then to divine the cause—eh ! well, be it so ; will you name me a flower ?"

"Why, the *chemelee*,"* said the fair maid.

"The *chemelee*,—let me see,—let me see, the *chemelee*," muttered the old woman, and she counted and calculated something on her skinny fingers;—"thou art in love, honey, if the science belies me not;—your lover, I find, is descended from a very noble family: am I right?—Oh! why do you hang down your head thus? Let us hear the name of this fortunate person who has won your affection, for my skill goes no further."

Soudameenee blushed and turned aside her head.

"He is assuredly a most handsome Chieftain," proceeded the old woman; "moreover, Datta Ram is in high favor at Court now, and to speak the truth——"

"And to speak the truth, thou art the greatest fool in the whole world," interrupted the fair girl.

"Why, have I hit the wrong mark?" asked the dame.

"The wrong mark, sayest thou?" exclaimed the daughter of Bheem. "Why, I cannot even bear the name of that stupid old man; he has been pestering me for the last two years, and though I have repeatedly told him that I can never persuade myself to love him, he still insolently persists with his suit; moreover, he is so exceedingly vain of his own merits——"

"As to that," interrupted Leelavatee, "I have not the least doubt; 'tis what I was thinking too, that nature cannot so grossly err as to couple a young damsel of such incomparable beauty with an old man of nearly forty, and who, forsooth, has nothing else to recommend him but his great wealth. But——"

"But what?" asked Soudameenee impatiently.

"The displeasure of the King, in case you refuse to marry him," said the old woman. "I hear this Datta Ram is somehow

* Jessamine.

distantly related to His Majesty, who, I am told, has partly the consent of your father to marry you to him."

"Pooh!" cried the young lady, "if the King, who is father of his people, be thus disposed to tyranny, I would not care if I disobeyed his commands; for I know that a Jhootnee can never barter her love for the approbation of earthly sovereign, and that she despairs a life that must give up its happiness to the caprice of a Prince."

"Rightly said," replied the dame, "but may I know the name of the happy mortal, who seems to have won your affection?"

The color mounted to the cheek of the fair Soudameer, and she was silent.

"What makes thee blush so deeply?" said the old woman very affectionately. "Speak, child."

"His name is Soorut Sing," she replied at length, fain and hung down her head.

"Soorut Sing!" echoed the dame, "Soorut Sing, the son of Mohadeo Sing (peace be to his memory!) than whom a greater warrior Rajasthan never saw; he is a worthy youth indeed. I knew him when he was a child, and his good mother loved me exceedingly. Even then I predicted that Soorut would be a great man, that his fame would be echoed from the farthest limits of the world; in fact, that he would be a man every way worthy of his valiant father. What damsel could help falling in love with such a youth, whose face rivals the full moon, and who is the personification of love itself?"

"My father, you know," continued Soudameenee, assuming courage from the indulgent tone of the discreet Leelavati, "was a great friend of Mohadeo Sing; when I was very young, Soorut, then only a child, often came to our house, and we were playmates and friends; but soon love approached us under the garb of friendship, and we plighted our faith unknown to our parents. But of late years, owing to some disagreement

between my father and the young Chieftain, my long cherished hopes seem to be at an end, and I fear despair must be my only portion. This is the whole history of our love ; and now that you have managed to get out my secret, tell me, good lady, if you can, in any way, assist me in this matter. The King, I am also told, is anxious to make me the bride of this detested Datta Ram very soon, but I am resolved rather to die than to give my hand to that insolent old fellow. Say, mother, can you give me any advice on this point ?"

" Mercy on me !" exclaimed Leelavatee, with a degree of consternation, " what—advise you to thwart the wishes of the King, and have my head set grinning on a post in the great square I suppose ? for what else will be my fate if the King should happen to know anything about it ?"

The youthful daughter of Bheem then hung her fair hands round the neck of the old woman, and coaxed and entreated her, and, offering her a pearl necklace of great value, prayed her not to refuse her aid to a helpless girl, " for," said she, " it would at once break my heart, and I shall die if my love be unsuccessful." The string of pearls was a temptation which the discreet matron could not resist. Besides, what could she do ? Was she to see such a beautiful girl die ? No, she would rather hazard her own neck, than be the most distant cause of consigning a fair and blooming creature to an early grave.

" It is not for filthy lucre, my child," said she, " that I will hazard my life, but because my foolish heart cannot bear to see the sufferings of any human being, much less of my own sex : it is, therefore, that I expose myself so often to dangers and difficulties. I promise you, my darling, that I will try my best for you ; I will go and procure, by any means possible, an interview with Soorut Sing, and concert some plan that may ensure success to your love."

" Do, good mother," said Soudameenee earnestly, and she hung the string of pearls round the neck of the old dame ; adding, " I will reward thee handsomely for thy toils, good mother, therefore be thou stirring."

Leelavatee smiled a little and said, " I take my leave for the present, and if it shall please *Govindjee*,* I will give thee happy news to-morrow morning." She then made her obeisance and retired. 18 852.

The next morning dawned, and Soudameenee having passed an anxious and sleepless night, early left her downy bed, and waited impatiently for the promised visit of Leelavatee. She idly paced the hall, and every now and then looked out to see if the dame was coming, but all in vain : the appointed hour was passed, till despairing of success, she leaned over the balcony that overlooked the garden, and there wept in silence ; her tears, leaving their crystel cells, fell drop by drop on the beds of flowers at the foot of the house, and shone in the sunbeams fairer than the morning dew. At length, being overpowered with her sorrow and exhausted with weeping, she reposed upon the *musnud*, and there soon fell asleep.

It was nearly noon when the worthy Leelavatee stealthily approached, and found evident traces that this youthful Beauty had wept herself asleep ; she therefore sat beside the *musnud*, and began idly rocking herself to and fro. After some time Soudameenee opened her eyes, and immediately sitting up, said :—" Is it thou Leelavatee that I see, art thou come at last ?"

" Yes, my child," said the old woman.

" Now tell me, good woman," said the girl impatiently, " what news you have for me."

" Not so good as we could wish," said the dame ; " in short, I procured an interview with the youthful Chieftain who has

* Another name of Krishna.

won your heart, and found that his impatience to obtain the angel he adores was only excelled by the intensity of his love ; he would have long ere this thrown himself at your feet, but the vigilance of your father, who now jealously watches your movements, has frustrated all his attempts. We had a long conference, and taxing all our ingenuity, we could not fix upon any other plan by which you would be able to thwart the wishes of the King and secure your own happiness, than to fly to some foreign and distant Raj, far beyond the power of our King."

Soudameenee was silent.

" What, if I agree to it ? " she said at length ; " but is it possible for me to fly ? "

" Possible ! " exclaimed Leelavatee, " why not possible ? Has not Soorut Sing settled everything for that ? Our fat *jemadar* has been largely bribed by him, that he may forget to lock the private door of the garden till you are gone ; the guards of the city gate shall be made to sleep with the well-known composition of *majoom*,* and so an easy passage shall be found there ; horses shall be ready at a little distance from the garden, and Soorut Sing shall come and liberate you from this guarded prison. You will then proceed in disguise from obscure village to village, till you are out of all danger—that is to say, all this shall be done, provided you are willing to fly.

" I am ready," said the fair girl ; " only tell me which is that blessed hour when Soorut Sing will come."

" It shall be exactly at the noon of night," replied the old woman ; " but tell me truly, my darling, do you feel no reluctance to leave your native country and your paternal roof ? "

" The spirit of a Rajpootnee cannot brook to remain in a country where the King tyrannizes over his people, and where

* A kind of sweetmeat mixed with narcotic, which causes stupefaction.

a father is ready to sacrifice the happiness of his daughter to the pleasure of his Prince."

"Enough;" replied the dame, "I will go and speak of your resolution to Soorut Sing, and by the grace of *Govindjee*, I hope you shall soon be united to the bridegroom of your choice, and your happiness secured for ever."

Soudameenee colored faintly, and the old woman took her leave.

* * * * *

It was past midnight, and the pale moon cast a dim and sickly light on the surrounding scenery. All enjoyed at this time "the honey-heavy dews of slumber," and even the guards in the house of Ameer Bheem Sing were all asleep in their respective posts. But the eyelids of the beautiful Soudameenee knew not the sweets of slumber. She sat beside the window that overlooked the garden, and impatiently waited for the approach of her lover. She had sat there for a long time, but there was no trace of Soorut Sing's coming. At last her eyes discovered a figure muffled up in a black dress, moving with stealthy pace through the garden; Soudameenee was immediately on her legs, and anxiously watched the motion of the figure, which, gradually approaching the building, stood just under the window, and she could distinctly hear a low voice saying to her, "Haste thee, love, the stars are fading, and ere long it will be morning."—"I come—I come," she replied, and quickly fastening a sort of a silken ladder to the balcony, with a beating heart she descended the steps to the garden, and was received in the arms of Soorut Sing. Her feelings overpowered her for some time, and she was silent; but at length she exclaimed with a voice full of joy, "O, how happy am I to see you again!—but how could you be so forgetful of me so long? you are too cruel—too cruel, my dear."

Soorut Sing whispered in her ear—"I am thine, love, for ever and for ever ;—but hush ! we may be overheard, and detected in our flight."

They quickly passed through the private door of the garden which had been left open, as previously concerted. They had not gone very far, when they heard the gruff voice of the *jemadar* cursing the guards for their supposed negligence, and soon after the door was closed. They soon came to where the little groom of Soorut Sing waited with the horses for them, and Soorut having doffed the black cloak in which he had muffled himself, dismissed his groom. Soudameenee was next assisted to a little white pony by the gallant Soorut, who himself mounted his beautiful black charger, and proceeded by one of those four principal roads that diverge at right angles from the great square. They soon arrived at the city gate, where, as it had been pre-concerted, the guards had all been intoxicated with Leelavatee's sweet-meat, and Soorut Sing found no difficulty in opening the gate : they easily left the city, and passed on without meeting with any obstruction whatsoever. But they had not proceeded very far, when they heard the tramp of a horse following them at a little distance. "We are pursued, my love," exclaimed Soorut ; "do thou ride a few paces before me while I keep the rear." He had scarcely finished these words when he heard a loud voice saying, "Stop ! —or thou art a coward and a poltroon." The valiant Soorut immediately reined up his horse, and taking down his shield from his back, and unsheathing his trusty blade, which now glimmered brightly in the pale moonbeams, he stood in a defensive posture, ready to meet his antagonist, whoever he might be. The infuriated Datta Ram soon galloped up to the place and exclaimed, "What a silly dog art thou, that dost dare to excite the vengeance of a lion ?" and with his naked *tulwar** aimed such a severe blow at Soorut Sing that, had it not been

* Sword.

for his dexterity and the tough hide of rhinoceros of which his shield was made, his body would have been severed in twain. Datta Ram reiterated his blows with redoubled fury ; but Soorut acted all the while on the defensive, and watched with the utmost composure the moment when he should strike. Datta was now partly exhausted with the violence with which he had begun, and Soorut Sing soon availed himself of this opportunity to attack him closely. By his superior skill in fencing, he succeeded in disarming his antagonist after exchanging only a few passes ; and following up his advantage, he quickly seized the *cummerbund** of the stout Datta Ram, and by a dexterous management of his steed, unhorsed his enemy, who fell on his back with great violence : Soorut immediately sprang from his horse and planted his knee in the breast of the fallen Chieftain. " Now yield thee, proud Datta," cried he, " or thou diest this very moment."

" Thy threats I defy, thou base dog !" exclaimed Datta furiously.

The eyes of the brave Soorut flashed fire at these words, and taking the *peshcubz*† from his waistband, planted the steel deep into the heart of his prostrate antagonist. But he had scarcely time to congratulate himself on his success, when a band of the city-guards, who had evidently been alarmed by the exasperated Datta Ram, came galloping up to the place, and he was surprised to see himself soon surrounded by them ; but observing the desperate odds that were against him, he at once gave up all idea of resistance. Soorut Sing, therefore, and the beautiful Soudameenee, who was at a little distance, and watching with the utmost concern the issue of the combat between her lover and the furious Datta, were both requested by the captain of the guards to ride back to the city ; " for," said he, " my duties require me to be strict, and I am therefore obliged to undertake this unpleasant task of escorting you to a

* The waistband.

† A kind of dirk.

place, where you must remain, until I hear the pleasure of his Majesty Maharaja Jey Sing." The captain, however, acted most civilly towards them, and they were soon conducted to his own house, where they remained under strict guard for the rest of the night.

The next morning the unhappy lovers were brought before the august *durbur* of the renowned Maharaja Jey Sing, who sat with all the pomp and pageantry of an Eastern Monarch. When Soorut Sing and Soudameenee approached, he eyed them sharply for sometime, and said, with a dejected look, "Is it you, Soorut Sing, who enjoyed so much of our royal favor; is it you then, that have seduced this girl from her paternal roof, and have been the cause of death to our kinsman?" Soorut was about to answer, when the beautiful Soudameenee stepped forward and thus addressed the King :—

" May it please your Majesty to excuse this forwardness in a woman who ventures to address the king of kings to save the honor of herself, as well as of this noble Chieftain, who is my affianced lord. We have loved each other from our very childhood, and had plighted our faith at the time when we were playmates and companions. But, knowing the desire of your Majesty to marry Datta Ram to me, and that my father partly gave his consent to the match, I was induced to fly with Soorut Sing from a place where my future happiness and peace seemed thus endangered ; for your Majesty is well aware that a Rajpootnee will never give her hand to a person to whom she cannot give her heart. If, then, my solicitude to save myself from a life of eternal misery has led me to do aught that meets with your royal displeasure, on my knees do I humbly implore your Majesty's forgiveness, fully confident in the hope that mercy is the brightest jewel in the sceptre of a sovereign, and that even the gods themselves delight in it." The King was much struck with the beauty of the girl and the spirit with which she pleaded her cause ; after a

moment's pause, he said, "Thou art forgiven, lovely girl, and for thy sake we forgive thy lover too. We know Soorut to be a worthy son of his illustrious father, and his services to the State must ever have a special claim to our consideration."

Soorut Sing and Soudameenee both kissed the foot of the throne, and the latter rising up, with downcast eyes slowly moved towards her father, who stood at a little distance from the throne, and whose countenance all the while displayed alternately the different feelings of shame, indignation, and pity. The beautiful girl knelt before him, and kissing his knee, said—"Father, forgive me, and if a daughter whom you once loved so tenderly has given you any cause of offence, she most humbly craves to be pardoned." To see an only daughter thus humbly kneeling at his feet and importunately asking for pardon, was a sight which the father could not bear : nature asserted her independence, and the old man wept. "Thou art forgiven, child," said the Ameer ; "rise, I forgive thee," and raising her up, kissed her forehead with a father's love.

The King, who sat watching this affectionate scene with silence, now said—"But Ameer Sahib, you do not seem to mark this youth who is now kneeling before you. We beseech you to forgive him too, and to crown your daughter's happiness by consenting to marry her to young Soorut, for he is, forsooth, a brave lad, and there is scarcely the like of him in our whole kingdom."

"To hear is to obey," said Bheem Sing. "The father of this youth, Mohadeo Sing, and myself, were very great friends from our childhood, and although latterly I had some slight disagreement with him, I would have been most willing to forgive and to forget his youthful follies, knowing, as I do, the worthy character of Soorut ; and truth to say, I would most possibly have given a willing consent to his union with

my daughter, had he directly made known his suit to me. But it is needless now to speculate on past matters ; I most gladly obey your Majesty's commands, and here I take Soorut for my son-in-law. Come hither, brave youth," said he, and taking him by the hand, embraced him most affectionately.

We need not dwell upon the festivities and rejoicings of this marriage, but will only say, that the youthful couple were soon united in a happy wedlock, and the loves of Soorut Sing and Soudameenee became proverbial throughout Rajasthan.

THE “GOPEES”* ADDRESS TO THE KOKIL.

I.

An ! cease, dear Kokil, cease to sing
 Thy soft enchanting lays,
 For, ever to our minds they bring
 The thoughts of happier days, sweet bird !
 The thoughts of happier days !

II.

And mem’ry fondly paints the scene,
 When in the *Tamal†* grove
 We joyous danc’d and struck the *Veen,‡*
 And sang of youth and love, sweet bird !
 And sang of youth and love !

III.

What time the moonbeams brightly glanced
 On yonder flowery mead,
 How oft we sat and heard entranced
 The BLUE God’s§ distant reed, sweet bird !
 The BLUE God’s distant reed !

IV.

When *Phalgoon||* showered her beauties bright,
 And bloomed both hearts and flowers,
 How joyous then we past the night
 In *Jumna*’s blessed bowers, sweet bird !
 In *Jumna*’s blessed bowers !

* The *Gopees* are the milk-maids with whom Krishna sported when he was in *Brindabun*.

† A kind of tree.

‡ A kind of musical instrument.

§ Krishna.

|| The name of the month in which Spring begins; it nearly corresponds with the month of February.

But past and gone are those sweet days,
 And all our joys are o'er ;
 Thy songs but sad remembrance raise,
 Oh ! sing thy lays no more, sweet bird !
 Oh ! sing thy lays no more !

STANZAS FOR MUSIC.

At midnight meet me, dear my love !
 When sweet the moonbeam from above
 So gently revealeth
 The fountain that stealeth
 In murmur'ring maze through yonder grove ;
 When trees extend their chequered shade,
 And sweet the *Kokils* sing,
 When Zephyrs cool from opening buds
 Ambrosial fragrance fling.

Dear love ! all idle fears dismiss,
 And meet me at that hour of bliss,
 When every eye cheating,
 Our lips slowly meeting,
 Shall linger in one precious kiss ;
 And long we'll loiter in that bower,
 And bright our joys shall run,
 Till love's warm glow our hearts shall melt
 And mingle into one.

THE DEWALLEE,

OR

THE FEAST OF LIGHT.

I.

THE sun hath sunk down on the Ganges' broad stream,
And faded and gone is the evening's last beam ;
Grey twilight fast yields to the darkness of night,
And flowerets and fields are enshrouded from sight.

II.

But lo ! the fair city illumin'd and bright
Shines 'mid the darkness—an ocean of light,
And seems a dear dream, or an image adored
From the depths of Oblivion divinely restored.

III.

On the *Ghauts* and the mansions, a thousand lamps
shine
And gleams thro' the palm-grove the half reveal'd
shrine,
On *Gunga's* calm breast, all, in splendor pourtray'd—
A land of the Faery, by magic displayed.

IV.

On the River's smooth bosom, maids graceful and fair
Are launching their love-lamps with tenderest care ;
And are swayed, or with fear, or with hope's ardent glow,
As flick'ring like fire-flies, the barks onward flow.

V.

Here pray'rs and devotions their blessings impart,
There music and poetry enrapture the heart ;
O ! ne'er was there yet a more beautiful sight
Than this city thus holding its gay " feast of light."

S O N G.

CUT swift the wave, my boatmen brave,
 So firmly ply the oar,
 That ere'tis dark, our bonny bark
 May touch yon pleasant shore ;
 For there I'll meet my own dear love,
 Who waits with ardent glow,
 Whose silk-fringed eyes expectant watch
 The Gunga's onward flow.

Row swiftly then, my jolly men,
 My promised hour is nigh,
 For Vesper bright, with rosy light,
 Already peeps from high.
 Ere twilight deepens into night,
 O ! place me by her side,
 A silver piece shall pay thy toils
 On Gunga's glittering tide.

THE ABHISHARIKA.*

(From the Sanscrit.)

HER beauty—Nature's fairest boon—
 She decked with gems of various hue,
 And o'er her face a blue veil threw,
 Which seemed a light cloud o'er the moon.

She who goes to meet her lover by appointment is called the *Abhisharika*.

(42)

“ O Lady ! why so swiftly glide
At this dark hour of midnight, say ?
And art thou not afraid to stray
With no companion by thy side ?”

“ The night is dark as thou dost say,
Nor fear I thus alone to go,
For Cupid with his shaft and bow
Doth guard and guide me in my way.”

THE MAID OF MARWAR.

A TALE.

MOHARAJA Oodoy Sing of Marwar, better known by the name of the *Mota Raja* or the "fat king," was by no means a very wise or intelligent prince. He had, however, latterly married his sister Jod Bae to the Emperor Akbar, and it was by his assistance that he had succeeded in regaining many of the possessions that had been wrested from Marwar. But this prosperity had its evil effects upon the weak mind of the Raja ; he soon sank into idleness and effeminacy, and was surrounded by a hundred gay companions, whose only care was to keep up a new supply of pleasure for their luxurious sovereign.

The too unwieldy form of the Raja made him totally unfit for any active amusement or exercise, so that he was almost always obliged to confine himself within doors.

It was a delightful evening, and Oodoy Sing was sitting in the verandah on a rich *musnud* from the valued looms of Cashmere. The superfine silk awning, worked in the splendid tissue of Benares, which was suspended from the outer cornice of the verandah, had been just gathered up, for it was

"The witching hour when night and daylight meet."

The soft breeze of *Phalgoon** fanned the pampered cheeks of the *Mota Raja*, while a handsome Cashmerian slave, drest in gay *bassunteet* robes, stood behind the *guddee*

* The name of a month which nearly corresponds with February.

† Belonging to spring, hence it means green.

waving a huge *chounree** over the head of his sovereign ; two fierce-looking mustachioed *chopelars*, in their full military uniform, stood at a few yards' distance to announce the approach of any high personage to the Court ; at intervals they exclaimed *adubb*,† in order to ensure decorum in every one, and to remind all of the proper etiquette and forms that are to be observed in the royal presence. Oodoy Sing was smoking his perfumed *hookah*, which scented the air all around ; a superb *pandun*,‡ inlaid with precious stones, was lying before him, while the Raja, having sipped the last drop of *Uml-panees*§ from the golden goblet that stood at his elbow, began to experience the vague, dreamy, drowsy sensation which that narcotic solution is sure to bring on. Moteeram, facetiously called *Mirza Sahib*, who was the favorite companion and courtier of the King, was the only person that was now sitting with the Raja ; but even he, like a thorough-bred courtier, chose to follow in the wake of his sovereign ; retiring, therefore, to the adjoining chamber, he laid himself flat on his back, and there began to snore. But the "fat king," however, was soon aroused from his drowsiness by a tinkling sound that seemed to come from the public road on which the verandah projected, and the Raja, ever alert on such matters, immediately guessed that it proceeded from the *anklets* of female feet, and, quick as thought, he jumped up, stood upon his thick stumpy legs, and leaning on the railings of the verandah began to gaze with open mouth towards the side whence the sound was heard : he was right in his conjecture, for he soon saw a beautiful young girl with her water vessel returning from the adjacent well. She was dressed in the plainest white garb, but her figure

* Yak's tail.

† Means decorum.

‡ A kind of covered receptacle for keeping betel leaves.

§ An intoxicating drink prepared with opium.

was so slender, and withal so delicately formed, that the earth seemed too gross a support for her. The Raja was perfectly fascinated with this youthful beauty, and looking towards the side where his favorite Moteeram had been sitting, and not finding him there, began to bawl out his name at the top of his lungs. "Moteeram!" exclaimed the King, "Moteeram! Moteeram! I say, the devil take thee and thy race! the moment thou art wanted most thou art sure to be absent. Sirrah, *chopedar*, call in Moteeram." The *chopedar* went into the chamber where the *Mirza Sahib* was taking his nap, and with great difficulty succeeded in waking him from his slumber. With hasty steps *Motee* came to where the Raja was standing; and as soon as he drew near, Oodoy Sing exultingly pointed out to him the beautiful maiden who had, by this time, come just in front of the verandah.

"What think ye, Motee, is not yonder girl the daughter of some Gundurva?* for by my royal head I swear that she appears like none of your earthly beings; just observe what a beautiful form! what gazelle eyes! what *nagnee zoofl!*† My whole kingdom for a single hair of that!"

"Nature, Moharaj, in her wildest moods of fancy, sometimes takes delight in crowning a single person with every beauty that she has in store, and here your Majesty may see a living example in this fair damsel; for, in fact, she is neither a Gundurva as your Majesty supposes, nor any other of the Heavenly beings, but the daughter of a poor Ayapuntee Brahmin,‡ one of your liege subjects."

"She might be the daughter of an Ayapuntee Brahmin, or of any other Brahmin, or the daughter of Indra§ himself,

* They are the good spirits, the "Glendoveers" of Southe's Poem.

† Serpentine lock.

‡ "Or votary of Aya-mata, whose shrine is at Ba Bhilara. These sectarians of Maroo, very different from the abstinent Brahmans of Bengal, eat flesh, drink wine," &c.—*Vide Tod.*

§ One of the Hindoo deities.

for aught that I care to know ; but of this I am resolved that she must, at all events, bless our *Zenana* with her presence."

Moteeram shook his head dubiously.

" Why shake ye your head thus, Motee ?" cried the King ; " dost thou mean that what I say is impossible ? But, no, I tell thee it shall not be impossible ; I am determined to possess this jewel at any cost, and you must procure it in whatever way you can."

" But I believe," replied Motee, " your Majesty is aware that these Ayapuntee Brahmins are of a furious character, unlike the gentle and pacific Brahmins of any other sect. I need, therefore, scarcely tell you that they would be the last to bear tamely any insult to their honor."

" Yet this empty fear should not deter us from the enjoyment of our pleasure. By the bye, this Brahmin is a subject of mine, as thou sayest, and dare he dispute the will of his sovereign ?"

" Certainly not—at least he ought not to do so ;—that is," adding in an undertone, " if he is the greatest scoundrel living."

" Ha ! what dost thou mean ?" said the King, his eyes flashing fire with rage.

" Nothing, my liege," said Motee, with perfect composure.

" Nothing, save that he is the greatest scoundrel breathing, if he will not think of the consequences of your royal displeasure."

The fickle-minded King seemed satisfied with this explanation, for his mind was too busily engrossed with the object of his desire to take notice of anything else.

" It is my *command* that you bring this girl within a fortnight from this day, or your head shall answer for it."

Moteeram, seeing that it would be needless to expostulate, and that further contradiction would only serve to enrage him, made a profound bow and said, " Moharaj, to hear is to obey."

" Haste thee, then, if thou would'st save thy head," said the King.

" One word more, my liege, and I will be gone."

" Something about *ashruffees*,* I warrant !"

Motee stood mute as though he gave assent to what the King said.

" We know thou would'st drain us of our last *courree* this way. But yet I must give you something now, were it for the necessary expenses of this jolly affair, or were it only to fill thy ever empty pouches. Here," added the King, taking out a purse from a small box that was lying beside him, " here are fifty pieces of gold for the present, and you know what good luck awaits you if you can please your sovereign." Moteeram respectfully extended both his hands to receive the royal gift, and having made a profound obeisance in token of acknowledgment, soon made his exit. Half pleased and half grumbling, Motee hastily descended the staircase, and as he proceeded along the road that led to his house, he began to cogitate what was the best course he could choose, and thus fell into a sort of soliloquy.

" Now that I have pocketed these fifty pieces of gold, the best chance of safety lies in flying to some foreign Raj. Curse on the fate that placed the crown on a donkey's head ! It is every six days out of the seven that I am sent on such goose-errands as these, and if I cannot succeed in encompassing his wild desires, the consequence is evident. Poor Motee must dance in the air, and his head must answer for such failures ! This is capital, indeed ! The vilest dog is better off than I am. I am sick of such a sovereign and such a service ! Yet stay, it is this that makes thy fortune, Motee ; for had it not been for this stupid thing who offers himself to be led by the nose, it would have been hard work for thee to get thy bare subsistence ;

A kind of Indian gold coin.

as it is, I think I ought to thank my stars for having placed me in this fortunate situation, for every one knows on what terms I am with dame *Vacdevee*,* and had it not been for this happy chance which first threw me in the way of this royal fool, I should have been obliged to beg my bread for aught I know. Instead of flying therefore to any other country, I ought rather to feather my own nest as well I can. But the question is, how to get hold of this fair wench? Aye, there is the difficulty! Let me see!—yes, I think that shrewd dame Aunt Jovunnia is the likeliest person to accomplish this object——”

Here he was interrupted by a slight tap on his shoulder; he looked back and was astonished that Aunt Jovunnia herself was grinning beside him.

“ How now, *Mirza Sahib*,” said she, “ you were mentioning my name in conjunction with some other fair wench, as you call her? Blows the wind that way, eh !” added she, winking knowingly; “ she must be an extremely fair woman, much fairer than my friend, your good wife, I trow ?”

“ Nay, you are doing me injustice, Aunt Jovunnia, for I believe I have grown too old to play the spark any longer. But if you would just step into our house, I will communicate to you something that may tend to your advantage.”

“ Indeed! indeed!” cried the woman, almost understanding what sort of advantage was meant, and, chuckling with the idea of gain, followed Moteeram with the utmost alacrity.

A short account of this old woman may not be quite unacceptable to our readers.

Jovunnia was of a tall, robust make, and her complexion bordered on what might be called the darker shade. She had just enough of grace in her to make amends for a countenance not very pleasing. She was about her forty-fifth year, but

* Or Surussuttee, the Goddess of Learning.

she yet retained a large share of her youthful coquetry ; for still she dyed her lips black, and braided her hair (by no means very profuse, and qualified with straggling locks of grey) with all the flowers of the season. She had nobody on earth to care for, nor had she indeed, strictly speaking, any who cared for her. Just after the death of her good husband, she had sold her only daughter to a rich foreign merchant, for ‘her malicious neighbors’ often doubted her legitimacy, and thus tried to cast a slur on the fair fame of Jovunnia. Her family, therefore, now consisted of herself and a distant cousin whom she dotingly loved. She supported herself and family with the sweat of her brow, for she perseveringly carried on the profitable trade of match-making, both legal and illegal, and though her conscience did not exactly approve of the latter, yet she generally preferred it, as being decidedly the more lucrative of the two, for her principle partly was

“ To follow right or wrong where money led.”

Her following this last-mentioned trade, however, was not very publicly known, for she entrusted the secret only to her immediate friends and patrons ; nor was any one allowed even to suspect her of her sinful avocation, for she was such a furious termagant, that every body trembled at her approach, and none could ever dare impeach her character.

On the contrary, her neighbors, as if to propitiate her good will, generally called her “ Aunt Jovunnia,” believing that the addition of this loving epithet to her name might act as a safe-guard against the malicious and quarrelsome disposition of this greatest of vixens.

Moteerau had now reached his house accompanied by this old woman, and having taken her into a private apartment, thus opened the conversation :—

“ Thou hast a fair chance of making thy fortune, Aunt, if thou wouldest but persevere a little.”

"How? be a little more explicit, *Mirza Sahib*, if you please."

"Why, then, the plain fact is, that our King has fallen desperately in love——"

"With whom? with whom? pray," gasped Jovunnia with eagerness.

"With whom else, but with the daughter of that Ayapuntee Brahmin, Issur Doss."

"I thought as much," said she vacantly, as if disappointed in her expectation. "I thought as much, for I see after all there is no easy road to wealth. It seems that Kings take particular care to fall in love with such wenches only to whom access is most difficult; so that we poor folks have no chance of mending our little fortune without running our necks headlong into jeopardy. No, *Mirza Sahib*, this will not do; I must not lose my life for the sake of a few rupees. I am perfectly aware of the vengeful character of Issur Doss, and I would not, on my soul, knowingly disturb a serpent's coil."

"Tush!" cried Motee vehemently; "this is no reason whatsoever. What! afraid to stir, because the fellow happens to be a little surly? Would you hazard your reputation as a match-maker for fear of this filthy dog of a Brahmin? What care you for his vengeance or his wrath when the King himself will protect you?" But Aunt Jovunnia would no way consent to undertake this dangerous task, and it was not until after a great deal of persuasion and promises that she was made reluctantly to agree.

"I know, *Mirza Sahib*, the girl Neeroopoma is a gem which is alone worthy of the royal *Zenana*; since, then, you are pressing me so earnestly, in order to oblige you, and as an expression of my loyalty to the King, I will set out, happen what may; and, *Gunneshjee* willing! should I succeed,

I am sure she will be a *nuzzur*,* indeed, acceptable to his Majesty. Two things, however, I must premise ; for my task now will be like *Krishna's* attempt to rob the *Pareejat*† which was guarded so fiercely. Firstly, then, you must pay me two thousand rupees in cash, for should I lose my life (as there is every chance), I must make some provision for that boy Hurry Bukht : you know he is my cousin, and the only surviving male issue of our once numerous family." Here a few drops of tear trickled down the cheeks of the old woman, who, hastily wiping them away, resumed—

"Secondly, the King must promise to take me as an attendant in the *Zenana*, if I succeed in my undertaking."

"Soh ! Soh ! I have brought round the crafty woman at last," thought Motee : "now to higgle a little about the money, and so the troublesome job will be at an end ; for I know very well that, as to her second proposal, the King cannot have much objection."

After an exchange of great many words, they at last came to a settlement, and old Jovunnia consented to undertake the business for a thousand pieces of silver, of which two hundred pieces were paid down immediately as earnest-money.

The shrewd dame then set about her work with great assiduity. The mother of Neeroopoma had died, leaving her very young ; she was therefore brought up by an old aunt of hers ; but subsequently she also died, so that she had no other female guardian, but lived and bloomed under the immediate care of her father. But Issur.Doss, though he was a rigid disciplinarian, and had always kept a sharp watch over his daughter's movements, had latterly become a sort of religious fanatic, staying but little at home, and that little employing generally in meditations so called, and other religious ceremonies. Old Jovunnia, therefore, found it a much easier task to

* Any present or offering made to a person of rank.

† A flower which, it is said, "grows no where but in Paradise."

seduce the girl than she had conceived. She had been formerly known to the family, but the old aunt and the father of the fair maid being apprised of Jovuinnia's ill reputation, had cut all connections with her. Neeroopoma was then only a child, but she remembered pretty well having often seen the old woman at her father's house, but she knew nothing of the reason why she discontinued her visits latterly. The wily dame, therefore, could soon renew her acquaintance with the beautiful girl, and by frequent visits and well-managed conversation, succeeded in winning the confidence and friendship of the simple Neeroopoma. By her consummate artfulness she could easily sound the mind of the fair damsel, and inwardly rejoiced to find that it would not be so hard a work to seduce her from her father's home, as she had at first believed : it was then that, by hints and *innuendos*, she began to work up the imagination of the giddy girl. Oft would she sit in private with Neeroopoma and talk about the injustice of her old father, in not finding for her a suitable bridegroom, even at that marriageable age ; then would the dame take hold of her hand, and half in earnest, half in jest, pretend to read her fortune in her palm ; and would point out the lines and marks that plainly indicated her becoming the spouse of some "mighty King." Neeroopoma, though inwardly rejoicing, would laugh as if she doubted her assertions, while the wily old woman concluded by playfully questioning her "What she would give her, if her predictions were verified?" Thus, by artful insinuations, she so well laid the train, that the least spark would set the whole on fire ; and she only waited for a fit opportunity to fulfil her purpose.

The pleasant days of *Cheit** arrived, and with it was ushered in the merry festival when the fair and the lovely of

* The name of a month ; it follows the month of *Phalgoon*.

the city resorted to the gardens and groves to enjoy the sweets of spring, and pass the live-long day with music and song. O ! what a joyful sight did the gardens then present—here might be seen a party singing to the accompaniment of the dulcet *Veena*—there some fair dancer, adorned with chaplets of roses and jessamine, measuring her pace to the beat of the *Pakharas*, and oft was heard—

“The merry laughter, echoing
From gardens, where the silken swing
Wafts some delighted girl above
The top-leaves of the orange grove.”

It was at this delightful season of the year, that Neeroopoma got the permission of her wary old father to join the other maids of the neighborhood in their pleasure party to the garden ; but the crafty Jovunnia ever hovered about her like her evil genius ; and on this occasion, too, she did not fail to accompany her. On the road the old woman appeared to be very communicative and gay, but when they reached the garden, she assumed an unusual degree of reserve and seemed to shun all company, but gradually she succeeded in drawing off the fair Neeroopoma with her, and led her imperceptibly to a most solitary part of the garden, and induced her to sit beneath a shady Banian tree that grew there. It was now, as she thought, the best time to disclose her mind to her. She gradually introduced the topic of her marriage, and artfully hinted the great probability that there was of her being married to the King if she would but give her consent to it. Neeroopoma started at first at this proposal, but the old dame, by her persuasive speech, soon quieted her astonishment. She next pictured to her, in the most vivid colors, the happiness that such a connection would give her ; pain and misery, she said, would no longer

approach her, and that thenceforward she should lead a life of perpetual pleasure. "In a word," added she, "you will be the Queen, and the happiest mortal breathing. But," interrupted Neeroopoma, "how can a Brahmin's daughter give her hand to a Rajpoot King? Will it not be against our religion?"

"There you talk like a green girl, my child! Have we not precedents of such marriages in ancient times? Was not the daughter of the god-like Sookracharya married to a Rajpoot prince? and, *vice-versa*, were not many of our *Reeshees* and *Munnees** married to Rajpoot girls? I could quote examples by scores, but I believe what I have said is enough to convince you of the truthfulness of my assertion.

Neeroopoma made no reply.

In this manner all similar objections being overcome, the simple-hearted maiden was made to give her consent to become the bride of Oodoy Sing. The dusk of evening had by this time thickened into the darker shades of night, and the faint moon cast a glimmering light around. Neeroopoma started on her feet and said that it was already very late, and that they must now go home without any more delay; she went in search of her companions, but found that they were all gone; the old dame therefore offered to conduct her through a new road, which she said would be the shortest way to the house of Issur Doss. They proceeded, and Jovunnia led through a street solitary and dismal; for sometime both held their peace, at length Neeroopoma broke the silence.

"I am thinking, dear Jovunnia, that my cruel father will never consent to this match, however desirable it might be. How are we to manage the affair then?"

"And do you really mean that I should speak to your father aenent this marriage?"

" Certainly !—how can the marriage be otherwise accomplished ?"

" Accomplished ? why, by not mentioning the circumstance to any one at all. I assure you that is the best way of doing it."

" You mean then that I should fly from my father's roof ; but even that is not so easy neither ; you know with what strictness I am watched at home."

" That would not in the least interfere with our plan, you know ; wherever there is a will there is also a way. You remember, don't you, the story that these unclean Mahometans relate of the Gin who confined the lady within a box, securely locked, and yet with all that precaution could not thwart her purposes ; so, if you but consent to what I say, there are a thousand ways of putting our plan into execution ; for, lo !" said she, taking Neeroopoma by the hand and smiling exultingly, " here we come to the royal garden of Moharaj Oodoy Sing, and, notwithstanding the extreme wariness of your old father, you can now show him a clean pair of heels by just stepping into this gate." Saying this, she quickly walked up to what seemed a back-door of the garden. She tapped thrice on the door, and as if by preconcerted measures, it was immediately thrown open by an old looking negro slave dressed in brown, with a red shawl wrapped round his head in the shape of a turban. He made a profound bow to Neeroopoma, and said that they were most welcome, and offered to conduct them to the garden house.

Neeroopoma knew not what to do. Surprise and a sort of fear took possession of her heart. She could not stir. But the cunning Jovunnia gently took her by the hand, and led her into the garden, attended by the negro slave. The ebon vault of Heaven was studded with ten thousand stars, while beneath

was spread one of the richest landscapes imaginable. The tall palm trees that surrounded the garden reared their tufted heads against a clear blue sky, the hedges and plants glimmered in the moonbeam, while every herb and flower sent its odours more strongly on the night air. They soon entered a spacious well-built mansion, placed about the middle of the garden, with its interior beautifully illuminated. They were next showed upstairs by the negro slave, and were conducted to a large saloon highly decorated with furnitures of marble; the floor was paved with stones of various colors, forming a rough sort of mosaic work; while at the end of the hall was placed a sort of raised seat covered with the finest crimson velvet wrought in tissues of gold; on this superb couch the beautiful Neeroopoma was requested to take her seat. Jovunnia placed herself at her feet. But the fair girl seemed quite pensive and dejected; she knew not what her fate would be, and a hundred times did she blame herself for allowing the crafty dame to wheedle her away from her father's home; but it was too late, and she could not retrace her steps. She was absorbed in sad thought, for she felt an internal conviction, as it were, that her ambition would be the cause of her ruin. Jovunnia observed this, and tried to console her:—"Be of good cheer, my child," said she; "what aileth thee now; this moping melancholy ill becomes thy youth, particularly at a time when proud Royalty himself is about to pay homage to thy beauty and worth." At this moment the black slave entered the room, and announced that "the high in office, the great in learning, the incomparable *Mirza Sahib*," was waiting to pay his homage to the Queen of Beauty. At this Neeroopoma looked enquiringly at Jovunnia, as though she would say "what does the man mean?" "Bring him in," said Jovunnia to the negro, and then turning towards the fair maid, mentioned to her the high favor in

which Moteeram was with the King, and exhorted her to try and appear a little more cheerful, and to receive the King's favorite with becoming affability. The fact was, the weak-minded prince was somewhat staggered at the boldness of his own proceedings and was afraid to stir till the first out-burst of the injured father's feelings had subsided ; but not to be wanting in gallantry, he had sent his creature to excuse his absence to the fair lady. Moteeram came into the room immediately, and having made a low bow, said, "that, owing to a slight indisposition of his royal master, his Majesty would be deprived of the pleasure of her company for a day or two ; that, in the meantime, the Moharaj exhorted her to make herself happy, and that he (Moteeram) had received strict orders to supply her with anything that she might want." He then waited for her reply. But Neeroopoma looked vacantly towards the old woman and remained silent.

"Our bashful young maiden is ashamed to speak before a stranger, *Mirza Sahib*," said Jovunnia, "I must therefore give expression to her deep sense of gratitude, and request you to convey her sincerest thanks to his Majesty." Moteeram smiled a little, and having made another low bow, took his leave. In the next room, which was within the hearing of Neeroopoma, he gave orders to the slave to procure a dozen maid servants to attend upon the future Queen, and carefully to see that she might want nothing.

We must now convey our readers from the princely mansion of Oodoy Sing to the lowly dwelling of the Ayapuntee Brahmin. Issur Doss that night seeing that it was very late, and that his daughter did not yet return, asked his neighbors who had accompanied her if they knew any thing as to where Neeroopoma had been, but none could give him any informa-

tion. They all said that she had left their company during the earlier part of the day, and that therefore they thought she must have returned home before them. But all mentioned the circumstance of her being accompanied by Aunt Jovunnia ; this caused a great deal of suspicion in the mind of the anxious father, who again resumed his enquiries during the next morning ; at last one of the maids, more playful than the rest, who had innocently followed Neeroopoma to the solitary place in the garden, having overheard all her conversation with the crafty Jovunnia, now reported everything to the impatient ear of the father, who, well knowing the character of the King, suspected that everything was not right ; and the circumstance of Neeroopoma being accompanied by the wily hag served to confirm all his fears.

Maddened with the idea of this dishonor, he at once ran to the palace, and going up directly to the Hall where Oodoy Sing was holding his *Durbar*, fell prostrate on his face ; he tore his hair and beard, and began to weep most bitterly. On being questioned the reason thereof, he said that the indignities that had already been heaped upon him by his Majesty had made life altogether insupportable, and that therefore he asked the King to add the sin of killing a Brahmin to the one that he had already committed of seducing a Brahmin's daughter. At this the King was highly irritated, his eyes flashed fire, and he bit his lips with rage ; then looking towards the *chopedar*, cried, " Harkee fellow ! such lunatics and crack-brained fools ought never to have been allowed to encroach upon our royal presence." He then ordered him to turn out the Brahmin immediately. Issur Doss being mercilessly dragged from the royal *Durbar*, was exasperated with these repeated insults ; he dashed away his

falling tears, and, fearfully bent on vengeance, immediately repaired to the *smashan* (q), and procured five human skulls and ran home with them. In an open yard he dug a large sacrificial pit, and having placed these five skulls in it in a circle, covered them again with earth. Over this he lighted a large fire and began the ceremony of the *Homa* (r). He cut pieces of flesh from his own body and offered them as a sacrifice to the fire ; he next pounded a quantity of sulphur, and mixing it with the blood of a black cat which he killed that instant, made a thick sort of paste, with which he formed two images of a man and a woman ; having pricked each of these figures with a hundred and eight needles, he held them over the fire, and exclaiming vehemently, " Thus perish the base ! let them fall into the pit." Then rising from his seat, and adding a large quantity of fuel to the fire, which caused it to rise in a thick column into the air, he went round it seven times, and muttering the most hideous curses against the king and his own daughter, jumped into the pit. He was consumed to ashes.

A report of these dreadful circumstances was carried to the King, whose superstitious mind was filled with horror and dismay, and the figure of the Ayapuntee Brahmin ever haunted his imagination. He deferred his visit to Neeroopoma from day to day ; but rather ashamed to show this cowardice, he pretended that the unnatural death of the Ayapuntee was still fresh in the memory of every body, and that therefore it was not good policy then to visit the garden where the fair Neeroopoma was secreted. But his lust soon got the better of his fear. It was midnight, and the Raja, accustomed to keeping up to a late hour, was sitting in his

(q) A place where the dead are burnt.

(r) Sacrifice offered to Fire.

royal saloon. All his gay companions had one by one taken their leave for the night, except his favorite Moteeram, who still sat dosing beside the *Guddee*.

"Thou art indeed a rare good fellow Motee," said the King, breaking the silence which had prevailed for some time, "I wonder how thou couldst wheedle Neeroopoma from the bosom of such a villainous old father as that Ayapuntee Brahmin. Believe me, thy worth shall never be forgotten.—But what we were going to say is, that the lovely Neeroopoma must be pining for my sake; so, now that all the city is buried in deep sleep, I intend to pay her a visit this very night, accompanied only by you. We will surprise the divine Neeroopoma with a visit when she least expects us. What sayest thou?"

"As your Majesty wills."

The King then began to envelop himself in his best finery. Over his capacious form he cast a loose garment of the finest muslin, bordered with fringes of pearls; the rotundity of his ample stomach was enclosed in a broad belt of Benares brocade, to which was tucked a long sword *a-la-militaire*. His big head, which, for want of an adequate neck to support it, had been judiciously placed on the top of the spine between the shoulders, was now adorned with crimson silk wreathed into the shape of a turban. Thus rigged out in what he thought one of the most attractive dresses, the *Mota Raja* walked majestically to win the love of one of the fairest maids in Marwar. Moteeram followed the King. They soon arrived at the garden. "Hush Moteeram!" whispered the king; "softly now! else we shall wake every one of these slumbering knaves, so a good joke would be for ever lost."

Moteeram then placed himself in the lower hall, while the King with stealthy steps walked up the staircase. But be-

fore he had reached the lobby, he felt as if some one had laid his hand on his shoulder ; the King started and looked back, but to his surprise he could see nothing ; he attempted to move forward, but he could not ; he again looked back and placed his hand on his sword, but, strange to say, it stuck fast to its scabbard, nor could he disengage his hand from the hilt ; a cold shudder slowly crept over him ; his knees smote against each other, his teeth chattered, and cold drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. At last, with a strong effort, the King shrieked aloud, which roused the maid servants from their sleep ; they all in a hurry ran to the staircase. But a certain dark skinny hand had quickly seized the King by his *cummer-bund* (s), and with one sudden jerk raised him up from the ground, and before any one could come to his assistance, he was thrown violently against the stone wall, and his head was smashed to pieces. Soon after the women set up a loud cry, and the whole house was in an uproar. But all at once Moteeram and Jovunnia suddenly disappeared, nor were they heard of ever after ! All was now confusion. It was remarked, however, that notwithstanding all this noise and uproar, Neeroopoma was still asleep ; the maid servants therefore immediately ran to the bed-chamber to acquaint her with this disastrous catastrophe, but here again they were struck with another sight ; Neeroopoma lay stretched on her bed pale and emaciated, her hands and feet were cold as ice,—she slept, alas ! “the sleep from which no one waketh.”

(s) Waistband.

MOONLIGHT ON THE RIVER.

THE silv'ry moon, in majesty serene,
 Entronéd sits. Beneath, the Ganges spreads
 Its breast,—a sheet immense of crystalline,
 Where heaven's ethereal dome, begemmed with stars,
 Is mirrored,—“ beautiful exceedingly !”
 Along the verdant banks the stately palms
 Their lengthened shadows fling ; the mangoe tree,
 Its leaves with silver tipp'd, a chequered shade
 Extends ; while oft some silken plot of ground,
 Enamelled o'er with flowers of orient hue,
 Laughs gaily on the sight. In tranquil flow
 The stream rolls on, unruffled with a wave,
 Like infancy’s sweet thoughts—so pure, so calm !—
 And such the stillness that pervades this hour,
 That not a rippling sound is heard against
 The vessel’s sides. The winds, now weary grown
 With wafting fragrance from the nectar’d cup
 Of each fresh opening flower, have sunk to rest,
 Nor aught else stirs ; except at intervals,
 In melting cadence from some far off tree,
 Is heard the *Kokil* singing to his mate ;
 Or, oftener yet, the cricket’s piercing chirp
 That makes the silence doubly felt. ’Tis now
 That Contemplation reigns supreme ;
 ’Tis now that Nature with her Maker holds
 Communion deep. A spell there is in such
 A time as this that leads the pensive soul
 To tender mem’ries of the blissful past !

THE RAJPOOT SOLDIER'S FAREWELL TO HIS MISTRESS.

I.

ADIEU!—"Tis time for me to part
 While yet from bondage free,
 While yet I may persuade my heart
 To bid farewell to thee, dear love! to bid farewell to thee.

II.

Now sounds the *nagra* loud and deep,
 To war it turns my mind,
 I go where duty calls, nor weep
 To leave thee here behind, dear love! to leave thee her
 behind.

III.

Where lazy peace still holds her sway
 I cannot now remain,
 Nor must I love's soft voice obey
 The Rajpoot name to stain, dear love! the Rajpoot name to
 stain.

IV.

Once more farewell. If gracious *Raam*
 But spare this life of mine,
 For every pain I'll find a balm
 On those sweet lips of thine, dear love! on those sweet lips
 of thine.

V.

But if remorseless death should dart
 The cruel shaft at me,
 Though hence my spirit should depart,
 It still should pray for thee, dear love! it still should pray
 for thee.

THE RAJPOOT'S SONG.

(On the occasion of the festival of Hôli.)

[In the month of *Phalgun*, which corresponds nearly with the month of February, the Rajpoots celebrate the festival of *Hôli* in honor of *Canyaya* or *Krishna*. It is a time of great rejoicing to the Rajpoots; they throw at each other a kind of crimson powder called *Abeer*, and *Koomcooms*, which are a kind of balls formed of talc enclosing that powder. The grand day of the festival is the day of the full moon.]

THE full moon of *Phalgun* doth mellowly shine
 On the landscape that smiles with the presence of spring,
 And the music that swelleth from *Cannaya's* shrine
 Is blent with the songs that the *Kokilas* sing :
 The water-falls gleam in the moonlight afar,
 And stars on the still streams are brilliantly glancing,
 While echoes of laughter and tinkling *sitar*
 Are heard from the glades where the gay youths are dancing.
 Awake, sweetest charmer, awake from thy slumbers,
 And a garland of flowers I'll weave for thy brow,
 For bright in the moonbeams with music's soft numbers
 The gay feast of *hôli* we'll celebrate now:
 With *Koomcooms* and *Abeer* to-night we will play—
 O ! think what an hour of bliss it shall be !
 But what are the music and *Luna's* sweet ray,
 Unless, dearest love, they're partaken with thee !

A RAJPOOT WAR-SONG.

ON on to the battle, the foemen are nigh,
And proudly are waving their banners on high,
And the steel of their spears glimmers brightly afar,
On on to the strife with your naked *tulwar*.

II.

Arm arm my dear brethren—'twere surely more meet
To struggle with foes than to crouch at their feet ;
Let them know that all dangers the Rajpoot doth scorn,
He shall fight for his freedom and country forlorn.

III.

Ere long shall they find how bravely we stand,
And contest with our foes for each inch of our land ;
Then sound your loud *nagra* and on to the fight,
We 'll show these proud dastards our valor and might.

IV.

We have sworn by the gods in the heavens above,
We have sworn by our freedom which dearly we love,
We have sworn by our swords which only can save us,
To fight for the land which our fore-fathers gave us.

V.

So on to the battle,—none on earth shall we fear,
We'll strike for our homes and our kindred most dear ;
And bright in the air as our standard still waves,
We'll prove that the Rajpoots can never be slaves.

SONNET TO INDIA

LAND of my fathers! once for learning famed,
 In whose green groves the Muses loved to sport,
 Whose luckless children once sweet freedom claimed,
 Whose friendship foreign nations once did court,
 For ever Liberty hath left thy shore,
 Thy ancient prowess is now past and gone;
 Thy former glory that so brightly shone,
 Now dim'd, like star-light gleams but warms no more;—
 But still my heart with fondness clings to thee,
 Although no more that soul within thee shines,
 As fondly round a leafless, withered tree
 The grateful creeper still its tendril twines;
 For though for ever hath thy bright sun set,
 My own, my NATIVE LAND, I love thee yet.

SONNET TO EVENING.

Lo ! evening slow descends, with mantle grey,
 Besprinkled o'er with gems that far outshine
 In lustre, all that rich Golconda's mine
 Doth yield. The ling'ring gleams of parting day
 Serenely blend with night's approaching hues,
 And lend such faery charms unto the scene
 As spell-bound hold our hearts. The pearly dews
 That twilight weeps, stand glistening on the green ;
 The winds now weary grown are breathing faint.
 A halcyon calm attends the fall of day!
 —A calm, that's like the slumber of a saint!
 Dreaming of Heaven. When Death shall come O ! may
 Thus all my warring passions sink to rest,
 And may my soul with such a calm be blest!

THE HINDU WIDOW'S LAMENT.

I.

Ah ! when shall these my sufferings end
 My solitary grief ?
 Ah ! when from all these sorrows deep
 Shall I have found relief ?
 Thus early am I doomed to know
 A widow's lot severe ;
 This world is now a blank to me,
 A lonely desert drear.

II.

With penance and with fastings I
 A widow's virtue keep,
 And when I think upon my lot,
 With heavy heart I weep.
 Alas ! the time when fortune smiled,
 How little then I thought,
 Such endless grief and pangs severe
 Should ever be my lot !

III.

My mother loved me dearly once,
 But now she weeps to see
 My features wild and widow'd state,
 But speaks no word to me ;
 And when upon her lap I lie,
 My head she presses slow,
 And as she fondly plaits my hair,
 Her tears unbidden flow.

How sweetly do my youthful friends
 The bliss of wedlock share,
 While I, a wretched girl, am doomed
 To pine in lonely care;
 Kind KRISHNA, do receive the pray'r's
 Of a poor widow'd wife;
 And if my tears can move thee, Lord,
 O rid me of my life!

AN INDIAN WREATH.

BRING CHAMPA (1) from the bower,
 Fresh blown and of a golden dye; inweave
 Gay APRAJITA (2) of the richest blue,
 That rivals Beauty's eyes when lit by Love
 First dawning. BELA (3) too,—sweet BELA cull,
 That blooms in virgin loveliness serene,
 And with it twine ambrosial JANTI (4) fair
 Whose fragrance well may vie with PARIJAT (5)
 Of Indra's bower. Forget not NAGESHUR, (6)
 The Love-God's fav'rite; for with that he tips
 This flowery shaft, and him the world obeys:
 With these in clusters bright ASOKA (7) braid,
 —A charm 'gainst broken hearts and sorrow's pangs,
 And GUNDIWARAJ (8) that sends its frankincense
 Afar; then gather sweet SAPHALIKA, (9)
 That blinks and falls at eventide, nor waits
 It e'er the Day-God's ardent looks to meet,
 Like maids who coyly shun each wanton gaze;
 And RAJNI-GUNDHA, (10) that expands at night

(1) Michelia champaca.

(6) Menia Farrea.

(2) Clitoria ternata.

(7) Joncua Asoca.

(3) Jasminum Sambuc.

(8) Gardenia Florida.

(4) Jasminum Grandiflorum.

(9) Nyctanthus Amer. Matis.

(5) A fabulous flower which, it is said, is grown only in Paradise.

(10) Polyaethus tuberosa.

Alone, and like a lover's vow doth breathe—
 Its odor rich in secret. There—'tis done,
 The wreath's complete, an offering rich and rare,
 Fit to adorn the forehead of the fair.

WOMAN.

[*From the Sanscrit.*]

At the dawn of the morning the lily looks gay,
 But withers and droops at the close of the day ;
 The Moon in the Heaven shineth charming and bright,
 But fadeth away at the day's dawning light :
 So nature, to form something lasting and fine,
 Produced the fair features of WOMAN divine.

A FRAGMENT.

Sire slept;

Her head reposed upon her naked arm
 Of marble white, thro' which the azure veins
 In healthful mazes wander'd. O'er her back
 And shoulder waved, in undulations rich,
 Her curling hairs of jet. Beneath her brow
 Serene, thick-fringed with lashes dark and long
 That the rich damask of her cheek o'er-hung,
 Her half transparent eye-lids softly closed ;
 And veiled from view those orbs of light where love
 Supinely lay. A drapery of gauze,
 More fine than gossamer, flowed o'er her form
 In airy folds, that could not wholly veil
 That finely chiselled bosom, heaving oft
 In gentle swell, as if it would break through
 Its silken prison and would stand revealed

In all its charms voluptuous. A sweet smile
 Sat calmly on her rich vermilion lips.
 As tho' of love she dreaming lay. A joy.
 There was in contemplating that sweet form,
 While thus in helpless innocence it slept.
 Unconscious of the pleasure that it gave.—
 She seemed a heaven-descended angel bright,
 Who, weary with her journey hitherward,
 Had sunk asleep in tranquil peacefulness,
 So fair, so lovely !

BEAUTY.

HER forehead fair,
 Betwixt those am'rous curls that clustering hang
 And gambol with the wind, seems like the moon
 Between two parted clouds of ebon hue
 Serenely shining, and her beauteous brows,
 So exquisitely arch'd, surpass in grace
 The bended bow of Cupid. Her bright eyes
 Of jet, beneath those silken lashes, swim
 In luscious langour,—melting into love.
 Of richly tinted coral hue her lips,
 Which, parted by sweet perfum'd breath, disclose
 A row of brilliant gems more purely white
 Than priceless pearls, that Oman's lucid sea
 Imbosoms. In the Majesty divine
 Of her own loveliness behold her stand !
 "Twould seem as if fond nature wrought that form
 Of all things rich and rare, in heaven or earth,
 And then exultingly exclaimed—" Lo here
 My Masterpiece ! "

SONG.

(From the Bengalee)

O ! why doth night so swiftly fly
 And envious morning peep,
 When, sweet love, in your arms I lie
 Immersed in pleasure deep ?
 The sun, they say, with light doth chear,
 But this I say to thee,
 The light that robs your presence dear
 Is darkness unto me.

THE VOW.

On the bleak tops of mountains when verdure shall bloom,
 And the sun from the West his first lustre shall pour,
 When the odorous lily shall lose its perfume,
 It is then, dearest maiden, I'll love thee no more.
 When the fiery element to coldness shall turn,
 And Meru the loss of its stone base deplore,
 When the true soul no longer with feeling shall burn,
 It is then, sweetest maiden, I'll love thee no more.

INSCRIPTION.

(Written under the Statue of Silence placed in a Garden.)

Stranger ! If chance hath led thy footsteps here—
 Unto this bower—to Love and Friendship dear—
 Walk in, and if it please thee stay awhile,
 With sylvan pleasures a few hours beguile.
 But mark ! of this secluded spot ne'er seek
 Thou ought in censure or in praise to speak ;
 Unknown to Fame this EM'RALD BOWER must be,
 For Silence self doth guard it jealously.

INSCRIPTION.

(Written under the statue of Bacchus in the same Garden.)

Enshrine'd in this bower tho' proudly I be,
Yet few 'mongst these gay youths pay homage to me ;
And still as I pass'tis my wonder I own,
How Mirth without Bacchus here prospers alone !

SONG OF THE RAS-MANDALA.*

I.

It is Autumn's gay night,
And the Moon's lucid light,
On Jumna's bright bower is mellowly glancing ;
Flowers are smiling,
Music beguiling,
And the gay dance of Ras the *gopées* are dancing.

II.

Merrily bounding,
The Blue-God surrounding,
Sweet smiles and soft blushes their beauty enhancing ;
All joyous they sing,
As their zone-bells ring,
While the gay dance of Ras the maidens are dancing.

III.

Sweet perfume and flowers
On their Lover they shower,
While he with soft music their soul is entrancing,
Or with Love's magic arts,
Beguiles their fond hearts,
As the gay dance of Ras the *gopées* are dancing.

A sort of mystic dance. See Tod's *India*.

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